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Professor Jerzy Kolendo (1933–2014) In memoriam

Professor Jerzy Kolendo was immensely hardworking, erudite and an outstanding teacher.¹ How great a teacher he was is best illustrated by his colleagues and students who were nicknamed “the school of Jerzy, the Mentor.”² Because of his vast knowledge and a wide area of studies, Professor himself was called by many the Last Great Polihistor.³ As he wrote himself on the University of Warsaw Institute of Archaeology website,⁴ his studies focused on three areas: the economic and social history of ancient Rome and related issues of Latin epigraphy, the history of contacts between Polish lands, or more widely, the whole of Barbaricum, with the Mediterranean world, and also the treatment of the Mediterranean world and of Polish lands in antiquity in both Polish and Western European studies. Last but not least, there is a large number of publications – books, com-

¹ L. Mrozewicz: “Między Scyllą a Charybdą... Wspomnienie o Profesorze Jerzym Kolendo.” *Studia Europaea Gnesnensia* 2014, Vol. 10, pp. 433–439; A. Bursche: “Wspomnienie o Profesorze Jerzym Kolendo (1933–2014).” *Archeo UW* 2014, Vol. 2, pp. 130–140; A. Zawadzka: “Wspomnienie o Profesorze Jerzym Kolendo (9 czerwca 1933 – 28 lutego 2014).” *Meander* 2014, Vol. 69, pp. 13–26.

² A. Bursche, R. Ciołek: “Wstęp.” In: *Antyk i barbarzyńcy. Księga dedykowana profesorowi Jerzemu Kolendo w siedemdziesiątą rocznicę urodzin*. Ed. A. Bursche, R. Ciołek. Warszawa 2003, pp. 5–6.

³ Ibidem, p. 5.

⁴ Cf. <http://www.archeo.uw.edu.pl/szablon.php?id=216>. See also a conversation with Jerzy Ciechanowicz “Z Rzymu nad Bałtyk.” In: J. Ciechanowicz: *Medea i czereśnie. Rozmowy o starożytności*. Warszawa 1994, pp. 273–297.

mentaries, articles and reviews. Between 1955 and 1995, Professor published 440 works,⁵ by 2005 the number exceeded 600,⁶ and he kept on working.

I was first introduced to Professor Kolendo by Professor Jerzy Axer in Centre for Studies on the Classical Tradition (OBTA, today Faculty of “Artes Liberales,” University of Warsaw). Professor Axer believed that Professor Kolendo, his teacher and friend, could help me define the topic of my PhD dissertation, which originally was to deal with Roman imperialism. Professor Kolendo brought three ideas to our meeting – the first one being the stereotype of the Carthaginian in ancient literature. I never found out what the two others were. We immediately got carried away by our “Carthaginian” debate. Professor Kolendo soon became my tutor during my four-year studies in the Starting Programme of PhD Interdisciplinary Studies in “Artes Liberales,” and later our cooperation became more formal after my proposal for doctoral dissertation had been reviewed and accepted and he co-promoted it together with professor Tadeusz Aleksandrowicz of the University of Silesia.

We used to meet quite frequently, mostly in Warsaw, at the university or in his book-filled flat, but also in Jagiellonian Library in Cracow where he would come for query. Every such occasion was intellectually stimulating but also exhausting. Debating with Professor Kolendo was always endlessly fascinating, highly demanding, very learned and at times Socratean, when he tried to get the interlocutor onto the right track without giving ready answers himself. On occasion we reached the levels of mutual understanding and intellectual stimulation which I could not attain with anyone else. He would then become very passionate and stress the weightiness of the conclusions we arrived at by enthusiastically repeating “yes, yes, exactly.” Every time I got the impression that he could work towards the suggested topic as well as any of the issues that turned up during our discussions by himself, without any prior preparation.

He never shied away from expressing strong opinions both about scientific papers and translations. One of the contemporary translators agitated him so much he wanted to point a (fortunately, only imaginary) gun at him. He was guiding me with extreme patience through good and bad papers, canonic books and critical publications, through forgotten and obscure authors and also through methodology of historical research which was completely foreign to me. His opinions about all the texts he happened to read, including mine, ranged from “trivial, boring” (the aforementioned gun-pointing gesture was accompanied by “embarrassing”) to “interesting” and “absolutely genius” and many in-between such as “nice, charming, clever, precious, curious” and a very rare, thus most valued “very good.” Every

⁵ “Bibliografia prac Jerzego Kolendo 1955–1995.” In: *Nvnc de Svebis dicendum est... Studia archeologica et historica Georgii Kolendo ab amici et discipuli dicata. Studia dedykowane profesorowi Jerzemu Kolendo w 60-lecie urodzin i 40-lecie pracy naukowej*. Ed. A. Bursche, M. Mielczarek, W. Nowakowski. Warszawa 1995, pp. 7–28.

⁶ Z. Kąpera: “Profesor Jerzy Kolendo (1933–2014).” *Nowy Filomat* 2014, no. 1, p. 13.

such opinion was followed by an explanation or development of the subject he was discussing. Professor's students, Professor Aleksander Bursche and Renata Ciołek, PhD, in the Introduction to the book *Antiquity and Barbarians*,⁷ dedicated to him on his 70th birthday reminisce about how Professor Kolendo would express his opinions. After complimenting the works he used to say, "I agree, I agree, all the same....," or "this text is brilliant, only you need to... write it all over again." That was why it made me so happy to hear that he "liked this one very much" after he had read one of the chapters of my work. He showed his interest in his students also by offering his companionship. He accompanied and supported me at an international conference in Warsaw and later we discussed my paper sitting comfortably on a sofa in the University of Warsaw former Library, where he had spent many years studying and reading.

I find much of his advice endlessly useful and apply his suggestions not only in my own writing but also in teaching students how to be diligent and how to have a broad perspective. His teaching not only allowed me to analyse source texts as a philologist, but also broadened my horizons, since he showed me work ethic in practice. He was always very glad to help with any kind of text, not exclusively my doctoral dissertations, and his desk was always occupied with millions of things to read. He spent a lot of time discussing them, also on the phone.

After my PhD defence, as a gift he gave me a very interesting suggestion for research, never done before. We spoke about it on the phone back in January, he seemed to look forward to our discussions. We never managed to have them.

His passing was a huge loss for his family and friends, his colleagues and students, as well as for many scholars connected with historical and philological studies. Professor was a kind man, an exceptional scholar, a great teacher. My Mentor. All hail to His memory!

⁷ A. Bursche, R. Ciołek: "Wstęp." In: *Antyk i barbarzyńcy. Księga dedykowana profesorowi Jerzemu Kolendo w siedemdziesiątą rocznicę urodzin*. Eds. A. Bursche, R. Ciołek. Warszawa 2003, p. 6.